

HOLY CROSS COMMISSIONING

1 June 1973

*Col Koch*

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to be here with you today / and take part in this commissioning  
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remarks primarily to the guests of honor, / those of you who are  
this day raising your right hand / and becoming officers in the  
United States Armed Forces. /

The last time I took part in one of these ceremonies / was  
two and one half months ago / out at Oregon State University. /  
There I had the pleasure of commissioning my son, / an Ensign  
in the Navy. / So I am very much aware of the pride / you  
parents must feel today / and the combination relief and  
trepidation / that must be felt by those of you / who are entering  
into this new / and very important phase of your life /

There are a few points I want to leave with you today, /  
things that you have to keep in mind / if you intend to succeed  
in your military service. / The first is that the military is  
a profession, / not a trade nor simply a vocation. / We cannot /  
lay claim to being the oldest profession. / There is another

group that already advertises under that slogan.

You are expected to be as much a professional / as any lawyer or doctor. / You are even more vulnerable since you wear the uniform and are constantly under observation by those around you. There is a real difference between being a professional / and being a member of a trade. / No one guarantees you eight-hour days / and 40-hour weeks. / There is no union to voice your discontent. / You have no right to bargaining power. / The military is not a democracy. /

One anachronism about our profession / is that there is no other in the world / for which your schooling prepares you less. / You have studied the history of your profession; / you know from whence it has evolved. / You have studied some of the sciences of your profession / but the primary job of any officer in the Navy, the Air Force, or the Marine Corps / is one of handling people. / ~~The success of any platoon commander, company commander, commanding officer of a ship or air wing depends totally on the performance of his people.~~ / You may hear it called leadership, / or management, or command personality, / or executive ability. / Whatever tag you assign, / it boils down to the same thing. / You must know your men, / know how they will perform in a crisis, / when the utmost is demanded of them / and know which of

them can be relied on to give you their best. It is not easy to lead, and there is no single set of rules which can be used by each of you. You must learn to use your own personality in the way you find best. Some of you will work best from a well-defined command structure. Others of you will circumvent the command structure and inspire your men to follow based on your own personal example and your own capabilities. The principal point is that you must constantly work at it.

You must develop your <sup>own</sup> style of leadership. There will be many other demands on your time. Some of these will appear to be more important, or more likely to reflect on your credit or discredit. But you can not let yourself be trapped by such false guideposts.

Your duty to your men will always be your most important duty simply because ensigns and lieutenants are the primary point of contact between the officer and the enlisted structures. Therefore you are the ones who will be in closest contact with our prime asset - our people - and you will be the ones in a position to shape the manpower of ~~the Navy~~, and thus, in fact, to shape ~~the~~ <sup>your</sup> ~~Navy~~ itself.

Now not every new employee is told that the fate of the

business is now in his hands / but that is what I am saying to you. / This is particularly true with today's Navy / of diminishing budgets, declining military image, / disappearing trained manpower, and yet continuing need / for effective Naval support of our country's aims and defense. /

Thus What I am saying is not just a traditional attempt / to make a graduating class feel important. / No - I sincerely believe that the future of tomorrow's Navy / is much more in your hands / than was today's Navy in my generation's hands / when we received our commissions. / Why can I say that? /

First, it is because of the technological revolution / in which we have lived for the last 30 years or so. / How does this affect you / when many of you are not technically oriented? / Simply because whether you are technically oriented or not you will soon be a leader / of those technically proficient men / who keep Military Forces <sup>the Navy operating.</sup> / Let me cite a couple examples. / Thirty years ago a Navy carrier pilot <sup>of</sup> preparing for a flight / would first inspect his plane from the outside, / then climb in the cockpit and feel the controls, / next turn up the engine and listen for problems, / and finally give the catapult officer the up-check / certain in his own mind that his plane was ready to go. / Today's

pilot still goes through the same ritual - but I think that it's more an ~~stavistic~~ habit than a purposeful event. On the external check today he can see only a few things; when he tries the controls he knows that his sensations are artificial, induced by the hydraulic system which his plane mechanic checked an hour before; when he turns up the engine he can't listen to it, it's deafening; all he can do is to read complex dials and instruments in the cockpit, but everything that those instruments are telling him, including their own accuracy, is dependent on some skilled technician. So while the pilot may think he is checking his plane himself before he entrusts his life to it, what he is really doing is trusting his life to a team of technicians who have tended his electronics, instruments and hydraulics. He, and therefore the Navy, are vitally dependent on these technicians and their competence and dedication. It's the same in the Air Force and in the Marine Corps.

This means that the care, feeding, motivation and subsequently the retention of our enlisted personnel today is not just a question of retaining someone to do menial labor. It is a question of whether we have an effective military. That is why your responsibilities that begin this afternoon are

so much greater a challenge than were mine / when I was in  
your shoes. / And that is wonderful for you / You will be  
facing greater challenges / but also accomplishing much more  
if you succeed /

No In addition to the impact of the technological changes of  
the past 30 years, / you must face added responsibilities because  
of the considerable sociological changes / in our country over  
the past ten years. / We have new outlooks on racial matters; /  
much higher general educational levels; / new attitudes towards  
drugs, and sex; / the aftermath of what was probably our most  
unpopular war / with its resultant effects on attitudes / toward  
the military and military service, / and a general disillusion-  
ment with authority / and the so-called establishment. /

How docile in comparison was the atmosphere / into which I was  
launched 27 years ago. / Men then obeyed your commands because it was  
unheard of not to; / they accepted your word as to what was right  
or necessary; / they assumed that the military purpose was a  
good purpose; / and besides, these men were largely a source  
of manpower not skill power. /

The military today recognizes that in these circumstances /  
your job is a tough one. / We are trying to adapt to the times /  
- to cast off useless traditions and practices / which are not  
essential to our military efficiency /

One example of how we are doing this is the series of Z-Grams that our young and dynamic Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Zumwalt, has issued. They cover subjects like not waiting in line more than 15 minutes, the wearing of civilian clothing on and off ships, exclusive junior officer sections in officer clubs, junior officer representation on officer club boards, an experiment in which two aviation squadrons and two destroyer squadrons are manned with officers one rank lower than usual, and a test operation in which officers are assigned to duties in other government agencies like Health, Education, and Welfare or the State Department.

We cannot do this  
No new incentives like these will work without you. ~~for two~~  
reasons. The first is that you are the essential link  
between command and the enlisted men. You are close enough  
to them in age to have their respect and yet to share a communica-  
tion channel. There is no way that new programs can succeed  
by going around you. They could by-pass a lot of admirals, but  
cannot ignore many of you and get to our objective.

Secondly, the Z-Gram program cannot revolutionize our approach to our people if it is only forced on <sup>them</sup> us from above. All of the changes simply cannot come from above. What the military needs is that you and I and all those between us accept these new programs as indicating a modern attitude and

a fresh approach. You must look for ways in which to improve our handling of people. You must find those traditions which can be cast off without loss of efficiency and you must find those inefficiencies which must be discarded in any event. You are the ones who will be closest to the problems and who must accept the challenge of carrying on the spirit of modernization. You will find many things that are in need of improvement. You will find that, as in any large organization, there will be many pressures and resistances to change. If you are up to the challenges ahead of you, you will accept with enthusiasm the opportunity to originate and stimulate improvements and to participate in their implementation. I think that half the fun of my career has been in doing just that.

Which brings me to my final point: A military career should be great fun. Maybe not if you like to do the same thing over and over again, year in and year out; maybe not if you always want a sedentary indoor desk job; maybe not if you are only interested in making money and don't require a feeling of contribution to our society and national purpose: But if you do like the thrill of leading people in team efforts, if you do thrive on new challenges and considerable responsibility and if you do revel in intellectual challenges in many different arenas,

Let me close by mentioning the other half of the fun.

Undoubtedly, in the past four years, you have been entertained by inspirational speakers ~~enthusiastically endorsing tomorrow's challenges, but now let me pause and highlight a responsibility seldom mentioned during graduation speeches our responsibility for your happiness.~~ <sup>+ save factor</sup> ~~I think we try to fulfill this in many ways~~ No catcher will play baseball motivated solely by a sense of duty and stirring words of inspiration from his coach. He must love the game. He must thrive on the excitement of a good double play. He must enjoy the comradeship and adventure of traveling with the team. He must derive self pride from the successes of his team.

A military career offers you one of the last frontiers of adventure. You will come to appreciate the excitement of first taking a plane through the sound barrier, the anticipation of discovering a different world as you enter a new port in the Mediterranean, the heartthrobs of landing a jet on an aircraft carrier, the admiration of a family who have traveled the world with you. Once I advised you will start early.

There is much that makes up the kaleidoscope of military life. Sometimes we overstress the hard work, long hours, and loneliness away from home. It is most important that you find satisfaction and fulfillment. If fun and zest don't come your way, in three years another profession will benefit from your experience. We need your services, your loyalty, and your ideas.

being even a small part of our vast  
important government Never lose sight  
then you will find the enjoyment and satisfaction I have in  
being an officer.  
~~and filled to overflowing as well as work~~  
I predict that, whether you stay with us 4 years or 30, you  
will find them the most exciting years of your life. It is  
up to you - it can be whatever you make it. I hope each  
of you may find the career that is everything you desire it  
to be. Good luck.

The opportunities  
are there

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I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR THAT I WILL SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF  
UNITED STATES AGAINST ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC; THAT I WILL  
BEAR TRUE FAITH AND ALLEGIANCE TO THE SAME; THAT I TAKE THIS OBLIGATION  
FREELY, WITHOUT ANY METAL RESERVATION OR PURPOSE OF EVASION; AND THAT I  
WILL WELL AND FAITHFULLY DISCHARGE THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE ON WHICH I AM  
ABOUT TO ENTER.                           SO HELP ME GOD.

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There are just a couple of points I want to leave with you today. The first is that the military calling is a profession, not a trade nor simply a vocation. We can not lay claim to being the oldest profession. There is another group that already advertises under that slogan.

There is a real difference between being a professional and being a member of a trade. No one guarantees you eight-hour days and 40-hour weeks. There is no union to voice your discontent. You have no right to bargaining power. The military is not a democracy.

One anachronism about our profession is that there is no other in the world for which your schooling prepares you less. You have studied the history of your profession. You have studied some of the sciences of your profession; but the primary job of any officer in the Navy, the Air Force, or the Marine Corps is one of handling people. You may hear it called leadership, or management, or command personality, or executive ability. Whatever tag you assign, it boils down to the same thing. You must know your men, know how they will perform in a crisis, when the utmost is demanded of them and know which of them can be relied on to give you their best.

You must develop your own style of leadership. There will be many other demands on your time. Some of these will appear to be more important, or more likely to reflect credit on you. But you can not let yourself be trapped by such false guideposts.

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Now not every new employee is told that the fate of the business is now in his hands, but that is what I am saying to you.

This is not just a traditional attempt to make a graduating class feel important. No - I sincerely believe that the future of tomorrow's Navy is much more in your hands than was today's Navy in my generation's hands when we received our commissions. Why? . . .

First, it is because of the technological revolution in which we have lived for the last 30 years or so. How does this affect you when many of you are not technically trained? Simply because you will soon be a leader of those technically proficient men who keep military forces operating. Let me cite an example. Thirty years ago a Navy carrier pilot preparing for a flight would first inspect his plane from the outside, then climb in the cockpit and feel the controls, next turn up the engine and listen for problems, and finally give the catapult officer the up-check, certain in his own mind that his plane was ready to go. Today's pilot still goes through the same ritual - but I think that it's more an traditional habit than a purposeful event. On the external check today he can see only a few things; when he tries the controls he knows that his sensations are artificial, induced by the hydraulic system which his plane mechanic checked an hour before; when he turns up the engine he can't listen to it, it's deafening, all that he can do is to read complex dials and instruments in the cockpit, but everything that those instruments are telling him, including

their own accuracy, is dependent on some skilled technician. So while the pilot may think he is checking his plane himself before he entrusts his life to it, what he is really doing is trusting his life to a team of technicians who have tended his electronics, instruments and hydraulics. He, and therefore the Navy, are vitally dependent on these technicians and their competence and dedication. It's the same in the Air Force and in the Marine Corps.

This means that the care, feeding, motivation and subsequently the retention of our trained enlisted personnel today is not just a question of retaining someone to do menial labor. It is a question of whether we have an effective military. That is why your responsibilities that begin this morning are so much greater a challenge than were mine when I was in your shoes.

Now in addition to the impact of the technological changes of the past 30 years, you must face added responsibilities because of the considerable sociological changes in our country over the past ten years. We have new outlooks on racial matters; much higher general educational levels; new attitudes towards drugs, and sex; the aftermath of what was probably our most unpopular war with its resultant effects on attitudes toward the military and the military service, and a general disillusionment with authority and the so-called establishment.

How docile in comparison was the atmosphere into which I was launched 27 years ago. Men then obeyed your commands because it was unheard of not to; they accepted your word as to what was right or necessary; they assumed that the military purpose was a good purpose; and besides, these men were largely a source of manpower not skill power.

The military today recognizes that in these circumstances your job is a tough one. We must adapt to the times by casting off useless traditions and practices which are not essential to our military efficiency.

We cannot do this without you. We cannot revolutionize our approach to our people, if it is only forced on the system from above. All of the changes simply cannot come from above. What the military needs is that you and I and all those between us accept these new programs as indicating a modern attitude and a fresh approach. We must all look for ways in which to improve our handling of people. We must find those traditions which can be cast off without loss of efficiency and we must find those inefficiencies which must be discarded in any event. You are the ones who will be closest to the real problems. You will find many things that are in need of improvement. You will find that, as in any large organization, there will be many pressures and resistances to change. If you are up to the challenges ahead of you, you will accept with enthusiasm the opportunity to originate and stimulate improvements and to

participate in their implementation. I think that half the fun of my career has been in doing just that.

Let me close by mentioned the other half of the fun. Undoubtedly, in the past four years, you have been entertained by inspirational speakers who have enthusiastically endorsed tomorrow's challenges, but now let me pause and highlight a responsibility seldom mentioned during graduation speeches - our responsibility to you for your happiness and satisfaction. I think we try to fulfill this in many ways.

First, a military career offers you one of the last frontiers of adventure. You will come to appreciate excitement like first taking a plane the sound barrier; like discovering a different world as you enter a new port in the Mediterranean like the thrill of bringing a destroyer alongside the pier in a gale wind; like admiration of a family who have traveled the world with you. Beyond adventure you will relish early opportunities to take charge - far more than the majority of your civilian contemporaries. Beyond this you will take pride in your contribution to our country and the thrill of being even a small part of our vast and important government. Never lose sight in the fact you are entitled to fun and gest as well as work. The opportunities are there.

I assure you that whether you stay with us 4 years or 40 you can make these the most exciting years of your life. It is up to you - it can be whatever you make it. Good luck.

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